



Solution for nature deficit

By ROD KRIMMER

It is likely that you are reading this newsletter on a computer screen. Even as this medium has transformed our lives and enriched us with previously unimagined quantities of information and entertainment, it has impoverished us in other ways.



The average North American child spends 44 hours a week immersed in electronic media. This is time that might have been spent outdoors in another era, learning about the world through play, its pleasures, dangers, beauties, and above all the natural relationships that bind us together. Doctors have identified specific negative effects of this trend and have called it Nature Deficit Disorder.

Luckily the cure for this disorder is simple, available and being implemented by parents and teachers who know the value of learning through experience. The forest is not just the classroom but also the teacher of the students. The lessons are many and they will apply long after the lure of the screen has faded.

Living, breathing classroom

Program has students learning from their environment

By SHAWN FLYNN

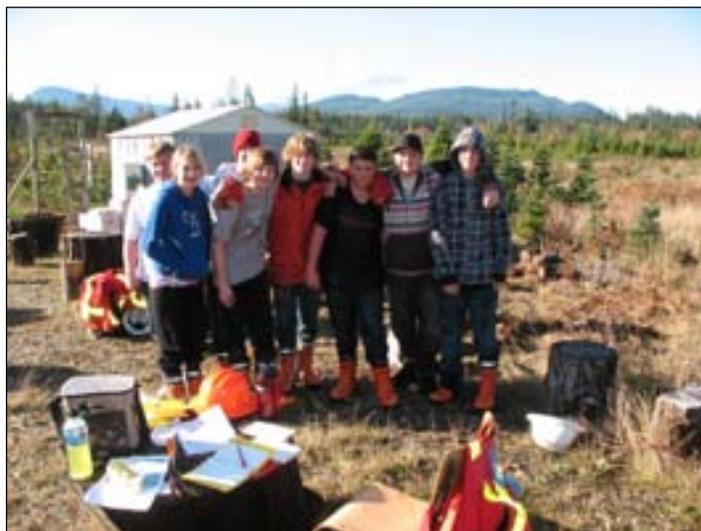
Students in some B.C. school district are taking the classroom to the forest and earning some real-world experience in addition to course credits.

Local organizations and school districts are presently participating in five pilot projects in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Greenmax Resources and the Port Alberni School District (SD70) teamed up to provide an educational opportunity not traditionally offered for grade nine students. The grade nine curriculum is being presented through a hands-on approach.

David McBride and Shawn Flynn of Greenmax Resources have worked closely with the students' teacher, Ryan Dvorak, in developing and presenting activities that encourage the students to experience and participate in this environment. A significant component of their grade nine curriculum has been taught at Woodlot 1479. So far, the outdoor classroom is a learning environment that appeals to this group of students.

The goal of the program is to encourage the students to enjoy



Port Alberni students are creating legacies of learning, for themselves and their community, through a unique outdoor learning experience.

learning through a different medium and to give them exposure to the skills needed to find employment.

The most recent project has been to learn the process and business of manufacturing maple syrup in the Port Alberni Valley. This activity has included identifying the trees, tapping and sap collection as well as syrup production.

The students have also been actively involved in the planning for, and development of, an Outdoor Learning Centre.

They have learned about the salvage of blowdown timber and have been involved in milling

this wood for the building. They will also be involved in its construction for next year's class.

To date, the hands-on approach has been embraced by the students, their parents, the high school, local business, government, First Nations and the community. The program has been such a success that the number of schools involved is being doubled for the 2009/10 school year.

Of course, the ultimate success will be judged as the students move further down their educational path toward a rewarding completion of their public education.

The world is Emily Müller's forest

FBCWA scholarship winner goes global with passion for forest management

You could say Emily Müller is a lot like the forest on her parents' woodlot.

Like the trees on Woodlot 1565 in Germansen Landing (population 35), a remote community about 200 kilometres north of Fort St. James where she was raised, Emily has been lovingly tended by her parents, Scott and Nevelle Müller.

Scott and Nevelle have taught Emily and her five sisters to grow tall and stand strong wherever they are in the world, whether it's the middle of the wilderness, or in the urban world of academia.

Emily has been busy since she was awarded the 2004 FBCWA scholarship. She recently graduated from UNBC as one of only two students to receive a special award of excellence for academic performance (top academic student in the Ecology and Forest Management program). She hopes to complete a double professional designation of Registered Professional Forester and Registered Professional Biologist.

While attending university, she completed applied forestry research under Professor Scott Green as part of a scholarship program. The research focused around ecology from the Yukon all the way down to southern BC.

In her fourth year, she went to Finland on an exchange program to the Finnish Forest Research Institute (referred to as METLA). Now that she has graduated, she has returned to METLA for a forest research contract working on forest restoration and seed bank projects.

What stands out the most about her university studies, says Emily, is learning about the ecology behind a given site. And she also discovered that the hands-on experience she



Emily Müller, seen here on a switchback survey in the Omineca mountains at -35C, is now living in Finland working with the Finnish Forest Research Institute. Emily, a native of Germansen Landing, won the FBCWA scholarship in 2004. SARAH MÜLLER PHOTO

got by living on a woodlot actually helped her with her studies. Her hope is that she is able to apply the knowledge she has gained at university to the real landscape, and the experience she has gained on the land to her ongoing pursuit of knowledge.

The scholarship Emily received from the FBCWA really helped her on her current path, she says. She is very thankful for the FBCWA supporting students pursuing an education in natural resources. She considers understanding our natural environment and forest very important and hopes programs like the FBCWA's will increase the number of students pursuing an education in this field.

Emily's experience growing up in a woodlot family has taught her first-hand the benefits that woodlots offer. They allow one to

see the full life cycle of forest management from start to finish, she says.

She has worked on a variety of projects on her parents' woodlot and been very involved with the Germansen Landing Breeding Bird Survey. Emily also worked on the Omineca Northern Caribou Project in which she helped locate collared caribou by helicopter as well as other wildlife activities including a winter moose census and checking wolverine traps for her father.

Her biggest contribution to her family's woodlot license was recently writing their Woodlot License Plan (WLP), the first in the Mackenzie Forest District. A WLP describes how the licensee will manage the area while taking into account the forest type, ecology, forest health, operating conditions, wildlife and other factors.



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